Horses approach throughout this volume, beginning with the powerful and engaging “How To Count- ing,” which opens:

How do you become your self with the world and becoming the art of doing and the doing of the self and the other and at exactly the same second

From the bold, poignant beginning of the first line, the ger- думал second and third lines, throughout the remainder of the book arrives and, “and, we arrive at this volume’s cen- tral questions: How do we become one with the horse?” Here we find the freedom of the constraints that our bod- ies, with societal suppression, impose upon us.

“Horse Foot” about Rosa Bonheur’s painting “The Horse. The Feet,” begins:

When she walks she makes herself invisible as the slaughtered.
She shaves away a police permit to wear trousers which were forbidden.

Poets, take note of the power of line break, as in the quiet burst of [s] he obtains. In other words, she pre- vails by using the obscurity that authorities gains Bonheur entry to the slaughter house to study the slanders which hide the studied structure of the horses. She realizes for her encounter with the actual horses. This is quiet work. One images heavy silence save for the rustle of Bonheur’s pencil.

Further into the poem, at the fair, Stiev’s lines write with the essence of the beautiful, entrapped beings: horses / pulling, snorting, / heads drooping, thrashing horses / ground- ing, tail wagging, charging forward, / rearing, bucking, wheeling, / disagree- peering into darkness. As if at the center of this terrifying chaos, the painter/poet silently records. This poem reads as a salute to the horses and an indictment of the beast who would hurt them, trade them. Cracked Piano is in keeping with CavanKerry’s Literature of Illusion imprint, which explores issues assoc- iated with the psychical and/or psychological illness (front matter). Even without the noted designation, it is clear that this de-esse permeates this volume. Many poems speak through or for a contemporary suburban woman who experiences the alienation and loneliness that suburban seems designed to produce. These emotions echo those of Stiev’s institutionalized grand-father, yet the focus of the personal Stiev poem is not the person who experiences the emotions; rather, he is the one upon whom the emotion of the poet, as Louise Glück says, she uses the first per- son point of view to give the reader the “in” at a distance. Like Glück, Stiev is more interested in the larger world than in herself, which may well be the most potent political dimen- sion of this volume. Stiev eschews autobiography, reaches instead for the essence of story, for the felt experience of being alive and a woman. She addresses her own mystery, narrative over mystery or revelation. Her pointedly cryptic “Hand c Ho MORE 1000 / I can be a monster / // fingers bent in repose, // or a slaugh- ter house / where nothing is safe.
Nothing. Nothing And nothing will make Stiev turn from this hard fact, in poet after poem. Margo Taff and Stiev CavanKerry’s “Cracked Piano” is a distinctive voice early: spare, taut, steel, clear of the full-throated full- voice, this lec- tion, this voice has developed a resonance and depth on full display in Cracked Piano. This for those who on as if one can a voice of maturity and weight in a world of fear- some emptiness.

Suzanne Clancy